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ABSTRACT

Assertions regarding the impact of the quality of the father-son relationship on sons' gender developmental experience have not been tested empirically in the literature. Such an examination is the focus of this study. As no relational account of the relationship exists, self-in-relation theory was used to ground these assertions theoretically. Specifically, it was hypothesized that the quality of the father-son relationship, defined as level of mutual identification, along with paternal empathy, would have a measurable effect on the quality of a son's experience in the gender developmental process, defined here as a gender role conflict. Fifty-one father-son pairs (sons aged 18-30) were recruited through college classrooms and work and clinical settings. Each pair was administered: the Gender Role Conflict Scale and the Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire. Fathers also responded to the Interpersonal Reactivity Index and sons to the Parental Bonding Instrument. The study met with qualified success. While paternal-filial mutual identification was predicted from paternal warmth and empathy, predictions of gender role conflict from paternal-filial mutual identification proved more complicated. Nonetheless, the data indicated that with methodological refinement and further theoretical development, similar predictions may meet with less equivocal results in the future. (Contains 11 tables and 38 references.) (JDM)

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GENDER ROLE CONFLICT IN YOUNG ADULT MALES AS A FUNCTION OF PATERNAL/FILIAL MUTUAL IDENTIFICATION AND PATERNAL WARMTH AND EMPATHY

BY

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ABSTRACT

The present study drew from several empirical and theoretical domains to substantiate assertions regarding the implications of paternal warmth and empathy and paternal/filial mutual identification for outcomes related to gender role conflict in young adult males. The traditional father/son literature produced two findings germane to this study's central assertions. First, empirical research demonstrated that paternal warmth and nurturance are consistently associated with high levels of paternal/filial identification and with positive psychological outcomes in sons. Second, numerous theoretical and empirical accounts of the relationship indicate that a son's gendered sense of self initially emerges within the context of this relationship.

Assertions regarding the impact of the quality of the father/son relationship on sons' gender developmental experience have not been tested empirically in the literature. Such examination was the focus of this study. As no relational account of the relationship exists, self-in-relation theory was used to ground these assertions theoretically. Specifically, it was hypothesized that the quality of the father/son relationship, defined as level of mutual identification, along with paternal empathy, would have a measurable effect on the quality of a son's experience in the gender developmental process, defined here as gender role conflict.

Fifty-one father/son pairs (sons ages 18-30) were recruited through college classrooms and work and clinical settings. Each pair was administered: The Gender Role Conflict Scale and The Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire. Fathers also responded to The Interpersonal Reactivity Index and sons to The Parental Bonding Instrument. The study met with qualified success. While paternal/filial mutual

identification were predicted from paternal warmth and empathy, predictions of gender role conflict from paternal/filial mutual identification proved more complicated. Nonetheless, the data indicated that with methodological refinement and further theoretical development, similar predictions may meet with less equivocal results in the future.

Social constructionist and relational accounts of the mother/daughter relationship and its role in female development have long been established in the literature (e. g., Chodorow, 1989; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991). These theorists have tended to focus on the high levels of relatedness shared by mothers and daughters and the role relational dynamics play in generating women's relatively more permeable boundaries and greater capacity for empathy. More recently, social constructionist accounts of male experience in the gender developmental process have also emerged in the literature (e. g., Pleck, 1981; Pollack, 1995). These authors have tended to focus on the culturally driven pressures males face during development and into adulthood to ascribe to traditional gender role norms and thereby attenuate their relational and affective lives. However, to date, no social constructionist, relational account of the father/son relationship has appeared in the literature which accounts for the role relationship quality plays in moderating the impact of these pressures on sons' development. This study represents an attempt to bridge that gap in the literature. The study hypothesized that paternal/filial mutual identification as well as paternal warmth and empathy should promote positive developmental outcomes in sons. Because the father/son relationship has been identified as the context within which sons' gender identity emerges, it was further predicted that these outcomes might be measurable in terms of sons' relative ease with various issues known to be difficult for traditional males: affective expression and relations with other males. Insofar as no comprehensive account of the role the father/son relationship plays in constructing sons' gender developmental experiences was discovered in the literature, an argument for the study's assertions was developed by drawing on empirical findings and theoretical material from various domains.

Dating from Freud (1953), identification has represented a crucial construct in studies of the father/son relationship, and is a major focus of the present study. However, as is often the case, the construct itself is not simple to operationalize. Furthermore, how identification is measured and its predicted outcomes have evolved as cultural values have changed. Nonetheless, the traditional father/son literature produced some findings germane to the present study. Specifically, paternal warmth and nurturance were consistently associated with high levels of paternal/filial identification (e.g., Biller & Borstelmann, 1967; Hetherington, 1967; Reuter & Biller, 1973), as well as positive psychological outcomes in sons (e.g., Jordan, Radin & Epstein, 1975; Kagan, 1958; Mussen & Rutherford, 1963; Radin, 1972). While these findings resonate with a relational perspective on the father/son relationship, the support these empirical findings can lend to the present study is limited. As the work was driven by unexamined, traditional gender role norms, most of the studies defined positive filial outcomes in terms of traditional male preferences and behavior. Further, according to Lamb (1981) these researchers maintained a unitary focus on the father as a role model for traditional behavior and largely ignored his role in the social and emotional development of his son.

Subsequent to this period, a generation of attachment researchers established empirically that fathers develop affective bonds with their children similar to those that mothers develop (Cohen & Campos, 1974; Kotelchuck, 1976; Lamb, 1976, 1977a; 1977b; Ross, Kagan, Zelazo, & Kotelchuck, 1975). Prior to this period, the importance of fathers in the lives of their children was conceived to be secondary -- primarily as an economic and emotional support -- to that of mothers, who were viewed as being more or less of sole importance in the object world of their children. Further, numerous empirical studies (e.g., Belsky, 1979; Kotelchuck, 1976; Lamb, 1977; Parke & Swain, 1980), some by the same authors, implicate the father/son relationship in

the emergence of a son's sense of himself as a male. While this literature supports the notion that real affective bonds develop between fathers and their children, its relevance to the present study is limited by a focus on infancy and early childhood.

Because the father/son relationship has been identified as the context within which male gender development emerges, theories of gender development were taken into account. Pleck's (1981) deconstruction of gender psychology provided an essential element of the present study's assertions. Pleck argued that trait models of sex differences, prevalent in gender psychology to that time, held that humans possess an innate need to develop a sex role identity (the SRI paradigm). As such, traditional sex role norms were viewed as important external structures, or developmental guideposts without which normal development would be precluded. Failure to attain gender role normality was generally viewed as a product of environmental failure. In place of the SRI paradigm, Pleck proposed the sex role strain paradigm (SRS), which better accounted for the damaging effect sex role norms have upon individuals. This and subsequent social constructionist accounts of gender development (e. g., Chodorow, 1989) hold that gender is determined by a socially transmitted set of standards, expectations, and norms to which individuals conform to varying degrees (Pleck, 1995). The constructionist perspective holds that gender differences are rooted in the culture rather than in biology, implying that gender differences are imposed on individuals according to cultural mores. As such, cultural standards for gender role norms can be problematic for individuals and for the full development of human potential for members of either sex. Pleck argued that sex role norms are generally detrimental in that they are largely difficult to achieve and usually limiting when achieved.

Chodorow's (1978, 1989) deconstruction of traditional psychoanalytic developmental theory provided a theoretical linchpin for the present study's assertions. In her analysis of

female development, Chodorow makes several important points regarding male development. Specifically, she identifies the culturally driven pressure for male children to partially relinquish their identifications with their mothers in order to forge secondary identifications with their fathers, with the chief aim of acquiring a masculine identification which may prove problematic. Therefore, according to Chodorow's argument, affective relations and gender development might be uniquely linked for males. Further, because fathers are usually relatively absent from the lives of their children, this link might be especially sensitive to variations in the quality of the relationship. As such, the varying quality of relationships across father/son pairs might have measurable outcomes for the sons in terms of gender related issues. Because no theory of the role of empathy and mutual identification in the father/son relationship yet exists, self-in-relation theory (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991) was employed as a model of the role of empathy and mutual identification in promoting optimal development. Though a theory of female development through the mother/daughter relationship, its authors explicitly argue that self-in-relation theory's emphasis on relationship (vs. separation/individuation) as the context within which the self develops and emerges may provide a model through which all human development might be better understood. Furthermore, more than anything else, self-in-relation theory represents a model of the role relationship quality, empathy and a sense of mutuality play in optimal development.

Finally, the new psychology of men provided a post-feminist perspective on masculine development against which predictions could be made. This literature calls into question the traditional male role norms, including but not limited to the emphasis on competition, emotional stoicism, homophobia, and detached fathering. It is consistent with social constructionism, and views malehood as a complex and problematic construct, the deconstruction of which may

provide greater clarity as to the vagaries of its attainment (Levant, 1996). Within this literature, Pollack (1995) extends Chodorow's assertions regarding the psychological impact of cultural dynamics on developing boys. Pollack argues that male gender development is fraught with difficulty, due to the experience of *loss* engendered in the process of disidentification required of boys, thus disrupting and damaging a natural propensity toward the development of normal object relations. Pollack argues that the experience of loss associated with these discontinuities are potentially sufficiently damaging as to constitute the developmental origins of the widely observed and well documented behavioral, relational and affective difficulties evidenced by boys and men. While acknowledging the cultural pressure toward disidentification, Pollack argues that the difficulties this process presents emanate from the necessity of repressing real relational needs, not only to avoid reactivation of a traumatic experience of loss, but social censure as well. The threat of this trauma is extended and magnified by the attachment of shame to normal needs for interpersonal closeness and emotions considered 'feminine' throughout boys' developmental process (Krugman, 1995). This produces a kind of internal double-bind, wherein the pursuit of normal emotional and relational needs constitutes a shaming experience, while failure to do so leads to loneliness and isolation. Because of these socially prescribed pressures to disrupt developing object relations, in order to accommodate a relationship with a father, the purpose of which is to form a masculine gender identification, the quality of a son's relationship with his father has strong implications both for continued affective development and a comfortable sense of oneself as a male.

Gender role conflict theory (O'Neil, 1981; O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995) represents a direct extension of Pleck's (1981) sex role strain analysis and subsumes the major concepts of contemporary male psychology. Garnets and Pleck (1979) described sex role strain as a set of

psychological conflicts emerging from discrepancies between an individual's perception of his/her personal characteristics and his/her standards for him/herself deriving from sex role norms. Such conflicts are argued to lead to poor psychological adjustment, particularly low self-esteem.

Gender role conflict is defined as a psychological state in which culturally driven gender role norms have negative consequences for a person or for others (O'Neil, 1981). Gender role conflict has its roots in traditional cultural norms and is transmitted to children through family, school, peers and media. Norms are internalized and operate on a cognitive, affective and behavioral level both consciously and more importantly, unconsciously. Men experience gender role conflict when they deviate from, or violate traditional gender role norms, and thereby experience either a discrepancy between their real- and ideal- gendered selves, or are devalued, restricted, or violated by others for that deviation, or do the same to others. Gender role conflict ultimately results in the restriction of one's ability to actualize one's full potential or the restriction of someone else's potential (O'Neil, et al., 1995). Through the development and frequent deployment of the Gender Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986), gender role conflict theory has provided substantial empirical validation for many of the assertions of contemporary male psychology. It also provides a theoretical framework within which to make specific predictions of filial outcomes which measures a participant's affective experience in terms of his relationship to gender role norms.

Therefore, if the father/son relationship is a relational context out of which a son's gendered self develops, and developing object relations are disrupted as sons are required to partially relinquish their maternal bonds in order to forge relationships with their fathers, then consistent with object relational perspectives on development, the quality of the father/son

relationship should have measurable impact on sons' development in terms of gender related issues, specifically comfort with affect and relations with other men. Such an outcome would be consistent with Chodorow's assertion that affective relations and gender development have a unique link for males (1989, p.50).

METHOD

Participants

Study participants were late adolescent and young adult males aged 18 - 30 and their living fathers. To qualify for the study, fathers and sons were required to have lived together until sons were at least sixteen years old. Sixty two sons responded to the study. Of those 62 sons, 51 (82.25%) fathers responded, providing a study sample of 51 complete father/son pairs. The sample was 70.6% of European descent, 17.6% of African descent, 7.8% Hispanic and 2.0% were Pacific Islanders. Mean age for sons was 23.7 (SD = 3.7) and 53.2 (SD = 8.3) for fathers. Sons had an average of 15.1 (SD = 2.2) years of education, while fathers had an average of 16.3 (SD = 2.8) years. Sons were 82.4% single and 17.6% married or cohabitating. Fathers were 82.4% married, 14.7% separated or divorced and 2% single. Both groups (fathers and sons) were 94.1% heterosexual and 3.9% homosexual, 2% of sons reported a bisexual orientation, while 2% of fathers did not respond to the question. None of the demographic variables was significantly correlated with the main variables with the exception of ethnicity and Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men. This matter is taken up in the Results section.

Measures:

The Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS; O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986) is a 37-item instrument derived directly from Pleck's (1981) sex role strain paradigm.

Four dimensions of role strain are assessed: 1) Success, Power and Competition, 2) Restrictive Emotionality, 3) Restricted Affectionate Behavior Between Men, and 4) Conflicts Between Work and Family Relations. The Restrictive Emotionality and Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men subscales were used in the present study. High scores reflect an expression of gender role conflict, or ascription to traditional gender role norms (O'Neil et al., 1986). Internal consistency, and four week test-retest reliabilities for these factors are good to excellent (Good, Robertson, O'Neil Fitzgerald, Stevens, DeBord, Bartels, & Braverman., 1995). The GRCS was validated through factor analysis and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), comparing the four derived GRCS factors to categories on the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ; Spence & Helmreich, 1978) which differentiated the four GRCS factors from PAQ categories (O'Neil, et al., 1986).

The Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ; Genero, Miller, Surrey, & Baldwin, 1992) is a 22-item measure of perceived mutuality in close relationships and is based directly on self-in-relation theory (Jordan, et al., 1991). The MPDQ assesses mutuality from two relationship perspectives: self and other. Thus, a respondent provides ratings of his/her experience of the quality of the relationship from his or her own perspective and that of the other person involved in the relationship. While the theory underlying the measure is one of female development, the deployment of the measure in the study of men's development is contra-indicated neither by the theory nor by the measure. Internal reliability ratings are excellent and construct validity has been demonstrated by correlating the MPDQ with measures of social support, relationship satisfaction, and relationship cohesion (Genero, et al., 1992).

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980, 1983) is a 28-item self-report questionnaire consisting of four 7-item subscales, each measuring a different dimension of

empathy. Two of the four subscales were used in this study. the Perspective-Taking (PT) subscale measures the more cognitive tendency of the responder to adopt the point of view of others, while the Empathic Concern (EC) subscale measures the tendency of the responder to experience feelings of warmth, concern and compassion for others. Davis (1980) reported good internal reliability for the four subscales as well as good test-retest reliability. Validity studies have found that the PT subscale is positively correlated with measures of interpersonal functioning, self-esteem, and negatively correlated with measures of social dysfunction. The PT subscale showed a stronger relationship with other measures of cognitive empathy than with measures of emotional empathy. The opposite relationship with these scales was observed for the EC subscale. The EC subscale was positively correlated with measures of emotionality, shyness and social and audience anxiety and negatively correlated with measures of loneliness. Weak correlations between the subscales suggest that they are at least partially orthogonal to each other (Davis, 1983).

The Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI; Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979). The PBI is a 25-item self-report questionnaire designed to assess two dimensions of parental behavior from the child's perspective: Care and Overprotection. Only the Care scale was used in this study. The scale contains twelve items and measures parental warmth and affection vs. rejection and hostility. Parker, Tupling and Brown (1979) reported excellent split-half reliability for the Care scale as well as excellent test-retest reliability at 4, 11, 21 and 34-weeks. Construct validity has been demonstrated comparing PBI scores to parents' ratings of their own operating behavior and also by comparing siblings' ratings of parental operating behavior to target subjects' PBI scores (Parker, 1981).

Procedure:

Recruitment was carried out through undergraduate classroom visits and direct solicitation. Initial distribution of questionnaire packets was to sons. Within the packet were two sub-packets, one for sons and one for fathers, and a letter instructing the son to fill out the questionnaires in the packet marked with an 'S' and to address the other postage included packet (marked with an 'F') to his father and then to mail it. Sons' packets included a demographic questionnaire, the GRCS, and paternal and maternal versions of both the MPDQ and the PBI. The maternal versions of the MPDQ and PBI were included to allow treatment of maternal/filial identification and maternal warmth as covariates if necessary. Fathers' packets included a demographic questionnaire, the GRCS, the MPDQ and the IRI.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations and ranges of scores for the independent and dependent variables for the regression sample (i.e., complete father/son pairs). Comparison of the mean values obtained in the present study with other, published mean values for the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS) suggests this sample may not be especially representative of the population. Significant mean differences were detected between this sample and others in studies of gender role conflict in college aged males (e. g., Cornoyer &Mahalik, 1995; Good, et al., 1995). One sample z-tests comparing this sample to Cornoyer and Mahalik's yielded the following results: for Restrictive Emotionality (RE), $z = -2.00$, $p<.05$, for Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men (RABBM), $z = -5.29$, $p <.001$. The same procedure yielded the following results in comparing this sample to Good, et al.'s: for RE, $z = -2.39$, $p < .05$; and for RABBM, $z = -8.29$, $p <.001$, suggesting this sample was especially low in both RE, and

RABBM. As the Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire (MPDQ) has never been used to investigate the father/son relationship, similar comparisons with this measure were not possible.

Table 2 presents the intercorrelations between subscales of the GRCS, the MPDQ, Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) and Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI). Correlations were generally weak, in the expected direction and nonsignificant, with some notable exceptions. First, paternal warmth was significantly and strongly correlated with sons' perceived mutuality in the father/son relationship. Second, father and son mutuality were significantly correlated. Third, fathers' emotional empathy was significantly correlated with fathers', but not with sons' sense of mutuality in the relationship. Also, fathers' RABBM was significantly and negatively correlated with their own perceived mutuality in the relationship. There was an unexpectedly positive, though nonsignificant correlation between both fathers' sense of mutuality as well as father's emotional empathy and sons' RE. Finally, an unexpected negative but nonsignificant correlation was detected between fathers' and sons' GRCS subscale scores.

Major Hypotheses:

The study's main hypotheses stated that mutuality in the father/son relationship, paternal warmth, and paternal empathy would predict low gender role conflict in sons. In the first hypothesis, sons' low Restrictive Emotionality (SRE) was predicted, in the second, sons' low Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men (SRABBM) was predicted. The predictor variables were sons' and fathers' scores on the MPDQ, sons' ratings of paternal warmth on the Care subscale of the PBI, and fathers' ratings of themselves on the EC subscale of the IRI. Standard multiple regression analysis was applied to investigate these predictions. These qualities of mutuality, paternal warmth and empathy, did not predict SRE: $R = .36$, $F(4, 46) =$

1.69, $p = .17$. The coefficient values for this model are presented in Table 3. With regard to SRABBM, ethnicity produced significant mean differences on this measure (non-Whites being higher than Whites) and therefore, was included in the model. These qualities of mutuality, paternal warmth and empathy did not predict SRABBM: $R = .41$, $F(5, 45) = 1.82$, $p = .13$. Table 4 presents the coefficient values for this model.

Post Hoc Analyses:

Inspection of the zero order correlations suggested that better models may exist for these data. First, a second way of conceptualizing relationship quality was investigated. To this end, a ratio of sons' over fathers' ratings of the relationship (MPDQ scores) was calculated to determine if disparity in perceptions of the relationship might better predict gender role conflict in sons. A logarithmic transformation was performed on the new variable to correct a positive skew, thereby improving its distribution. A rationale for this reconceptualization is presented by the study data. The data indicated that father to son mutuality had a suppressor effect on son to father mutuality as a predictor of sons' Restrictive Emotionality (SRE). While neither correlates significantly with SRE, sons' mutuality is correlated in the predicted direction with SRE while fathers' mutuality is correlated in the opposite direction. When controlling for fathers' mutuality, the correlation between sons' mutuality and SRE increased from $r = -.14$, $p = .34$, to $r = -.25$, $p = .10$. The new relationship variable produced a significant zero order correlation with SRE ($r = -.27$, $p = .05$) and a nearly significant one with SRABBM ($r = -.25$, $p = .07$).

For similar reasons, the impact of substituting fathers' scores on the Perspective Taking (PT) subscale of the IRI for scores on the Empathic Concern (EC) subscale in the model was investigated. The present study produced stronger correlations and in the expected direction between fathers' cognitive (PT) vs. emotional empathy (EC) and the dependent measures (see

Table 2). Though subject to continuing debate, there is a suggestion in the literature that men's empathy might be better measured as a cognitive rather than an affective phenomenon. While these adjustments failed to strengthen the model (R = .33; $F(3,47)$ = 2.00; p = .13), Table 5 indicates the inclusion of the Care Scale of the PBI fails to contribute to the model, perhaps due to multicolinearity with other predictor variables. Therefore, its deletion brings the model close to significance without changing the size of the effect (R=.33; $F(2, 48)$=3.00; p=.06). The coefficients for the model are presented in Table 6. The same adjustments were made to the model with SRABBM as the dependent variable. The results of the final model achieved statistical significance (R = .41; $F(3, 47)$ = 3.08; p = .04). The coefficient values of the interim and final models are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

Covariate Data

Data of maternal warmth and son/mother perceived mutuality were collected as covariates. Intercorrelations of these variables are presented in Table 9. Each predictor variable was significantly correlated with each of the dependent variables in the expected direction for SRE but not for SRABBM. When these data were used to construct regression models to predict both SRE and SRABBM, each model was significant: for SRE (R = .42, $F(2, 48)$ = 5.21, p = .01) and for SRABBM (R = .40, $F(3, 47)$ = 2.89, p = .05). The coefficient values for the two regression models are presented in tables 10 and 11 respectively.

In summary, the hypothesized regression models were not supported by the study's data. However, many important and statistically significant relationships between the study's predictor and dependent variables indicated that the study measured important dimensions of the father/son relationship and its impact on sons' development. The data further suggest that the

equivocal nature of the findings is likely the result of complex interactions between developmental, relational, and cultural variables.

DISCUSSION

Review of the Findings

Though the main findings of the study did not support any of the major hypotheses as put forth, close examination of the data revealed support for several aspects of the study's hypotheses. For the sake of clarity, the study's assertions are broken into two parts: predictions of mutual identification between sons and fathers from paternal warmth and empathy, and predictions of sons' gender role conflict from filial/paternal mutual identification. Prediction of mutual identification found more straightforward support from the study's data than did prediction of gender role conflict from mutual identification. However, the data contain information that may account for these findings.

Intercorrelations between Predictor Variables and the Dependent Measures

A strong and significant correlation was detected between paternal warmth and filial mutual identification. This finding supported one of the central arguments of the literature review, that paternal warmth would be associated with filial identification, and is consistent with the findings of the traditional father/son literature, that paternal warmth promotes son to father identification (e.g., Biller & Borstelmann, 1967; Hetherington, 1967; Jordan, Radin & Epstein, 1975; Radin, 1972; Reuter & Biller, 1973). A moderate and significant correlation between sons' and fathers' mutual identification scores, was also detected, lending support to the thesis that identification is a bi-directional phenomenon and an experience shared by both participants in a relationship (Jordan, et al., 1991). Further, this finding suggested that relationship quality and mutual identification retain importance in close personal relationships regardless of gender

of participant or parent/child configuration. Therefore, the data of the study support the assertion that paternal warmth, empathy, and relational capacity are meaningfully interrelated phenomena which have a measurable impact on fathers' and sons' ability to share mutually in a relationship together. This finding was crucial in that identification between fathers and sons as a mutual experience, independent of filial outcomes, has yet to be documented in the literature. This finding establishes the simple *fact* of mutual identification between fathers and sons in a straightforward manner.

While neither measure of paternal empathy (i.e., emotional or cognitive) was significantly correlated with sons' mutual identification scores, both were moderately and significantly correlated with fathers' mutual identification scores, as was paternal warmth. This finding is consistent with the proposition that warmth and empathy may precede the capacity to produce a sense of identification in oneself and in others. Further, fathers' mutual identification and gender role conflict were negatively correlated, suggesting that emotional flexibility and relative freedom from socially prescribed gender role norms enhance a father's ability to engage meaningfully in a relationship with his son.

A number of unexpected and curious relationships were also detected among the study's variables. First, both fathers' mutual identification and emotional empathy were positively, rather than negatively correlated with sons' gender role conflict, especially with Restrictive Emotionality. Also, fathers' and sons' Restrictive Emotionality were unexpectedly negatively correlated. While none of these relationships was statistically significant, a pattern of unexpected relationships between the predictor variables and the more affective of the dependent variables is notable. Together these findings suggest that within the context of the father/son relationship, affect may be acutely problematic. As such, especially with regard to outcomes on

affect, mutual identification in the father/son relationship represents a capricious predictor variable. Further discussion of this set of relationships follows below as reconsideration of the predictors of sons' gender role conflict is undertaken.

Rethinking Paternal/Filial Mutual Identification as a Predictor of Gender Role Conflict in Sons

Because both fathers and sons answered identical questions regarding their perceptions of the relationship, it was possible to inquire if discrepancies between fathers' and sons' perceptions of mutual identification might not better predict sons' gender role conflict than those perceptions did directly. The creation of this new discrepancy variable can be justified from both a theoretical and an empirical standpoint. From a theoretical standpoint, various authors (e. g., Levant, 1996; Pollack, 1995) have argued that a lifetime of socialization away from communication and relatedness render close relationships a difficult and fraught experience for males. As such, a measure generated by a theory of women's development may not be sufficiently sensitive to the vicissitudes of mutual identification in the father/son relationship to reliably predict filial outcomes. Consequently, at this point in time, it may be that discrepancies between fathers' and sons' mutual identification scores contain essential information regarding the impact of mutual identification on sons' gender role conflict, which the agreement between those scores may have missed.

From an empirical standpoint, several aspects of the study's data supported this proposition. First, the several directionally unexpected correlations detected suggested the confounding effect of unidentified variables on the study's outcomes. Second, fathers' and sons' mutuality scores were correlated with the dependent measures in opposite directions, indicating that one acted as a suppressor variable with regard to the other. Third, this procedure partly

accounted for between group variance, thereby enhancing the effect of the predictors on the dependent variables.

In fact, computation of a new ratio variable with sons' perceived mutuality scores over fathers' perceived mutuality scores produced a significant zero order correlation in the case of sons' Restrictive Emotionality (SRE) and a nearly significant correlation in the case of sons' Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men (SRABBM). Therefore, the data indicated a significant correlation between discrepancies in perceived mutuality and sons' gender role conflict where none was detected from the scores directly. Instead of higher levels of perceived mutuality predicting gender role conflict, higher levels of discrepancies in those reports did.

Interpretation of the newly computed discrepancy variable's relationship to the dependent measures is neither simple, nor straightforward. It is not simply that greater discrepancies in mutuality were associated with greater gender role conflict in sons. Instead, the relationship indicates that as a son's sense of mutuality increases relative to a father's, gender role conflict tends to decrease. Conversely, as a father's sense of mutuality increases relative to a son's, a son's gender role conflict tends to increase. Therefore, though clearly important, mutual identification in the father/son relationship may not be entirely mutual nor an unremittingly positive experience for sons. While the relative nature of this finding complicates interpretation, the implications of those interpretations are interesting and relevant to the topic(s) under investigation in a way that direct support for the study's hypotheses might not have been.

The relative nature of this finding can be understood from both empirical and theoretical viewpoints. The study data provide substantial evidence that one or more unidentified variables may have impacted the study's empirical outcomes, as suggested by the differential effect of paternal and filial mutual identification on SRE. Therefore, if sons' perceptions were not taken

into account, it would simply appear that a father's sense of mutual identification with his son might motivate a son to adhere to traditional gender role norms for a sense of identity or security. Conversely, without consideration of fathers' mutual identification, it would simply appear that a son's identification with his father would have little impact on his own experiences of gender role conflict. However, taken together, the two findings suggest that a type of synergistic attunement is necessary to produce the effect as initially hypothesized in this study, the measurement of which appears to have been beyond the capacity of the instruments deployed in this study. The data suggested that a son -- in a way not easily identified by the data -- must be psychologically prepared or willing to make use of a father's identification with him for that identification to produce the predicted effect regarding gender role conflict.

Closer examination of the mutual identification scores further illuminates this finding. Overall, fathers reported significantly higher levels of perceived mutuality in the relationship than their sons ($t = 2.47$, $p = .02$). This is an expectable finding and can be understood from a developmental perspective. Through continued practice, any individual in middle age can be expected to be 'better' at relationships than an equivalent individual in early adulthood. Therefore, specific male difficulties related to emotional expression and interpersonal connection can be expected to diminish over time. This suggestion is supported by the gender role conflict literature, which has demonstrated that young adult males struggle with emotional expression and anxiety related to career and separation issues more than middle aged men do (O'Neil et al., 1995, p.180). Further, sons in this age range often revert to negativistic denial of family bonds in the service of bolstering still tentative emerging autonomous identities. This would therefore, 'open the door' for fathers to be able to experience higher levels of mutual identification, while at the same time leaving some sons acutely unable to profit by those identifications.

Of still greater importance, the MPDQ is equally divided among questions relating to the act of listening and the experience of feeling heard: respectively, active and passive phenomena. Surprisingly, a significant mean difference was detected between fathers' 'listening' and 'feeling heard' scores, with listening being significantly higher than feeling heard ($t = 3.49$, $p < .01$). While the difference for sons was nonsignificant, it went in the other direction; sons tended less to listen than to feel heard. This finding suggests that fathers' identification in the relationship is a relatively more active phenomenon while sons' is a relatively more passive one. This finding helps illuminate two empirical curiosities generated by the present study's data: that fathers' mutual identification with sons' is positively correlated with sons' Restrictive Emotionality and that fathers' and sons' mutual identification has a relative relationship with sons' gender role conflict. If fathers identifications manifest in active terms, sons' willingness or ability to make use of those actions becomes an important issue. These data suggest there is effort (i. e., listening) on the part of fathers which the sons in the sample at least fail to make use of, and perhaps defensively resist.

This suggestion is further bolstered by this study's outcomes on sons' gender role conflict in light of the return rate of study questionnaires. As previously stated, this sample was significantly lower in gender role conflict than other samples of the same cohort in published studies (e. g., Cornoyer & Mahalik, 1995; Good, et al., 1995). Second, sons' return rate was especially low (24%), while fathers' return rate was especially high (82%). In simplest terms, this finding suggests that the fathers in the sample took interest in their sons' endeavors, a positive finding. However, the differential return rate suggests greater ambivalence in the relationship for sons than for fathers. They further suggest that benign effort on the part of fathers may in fact have a paradoxical effect upon sons, and that when fathers try too hard with

sons, the sons retreat to culturally prescribed norms for a sense of security. This finding is curiously contradictory with the arguments of both Chodorow (1989) and Pollack (1995) who argued that it is the relative absence rather than the presence of fathers which promotes adherence to traditional gender role norms.

Two explanations are put forth to account for this contradiction. This discussion has already alluded to the impact of a developmentally driven cohort effect on the study's findings. Therefore, it is reasonable to speculate that the anxiety attendant upon achieving adulthood and the cultural pressure to achieve an often unclear idea of manhood (Chodorow, 1989 p. 51), created some of the contradictions in the data. Studies have shown that gender role conflict is not static and changes over time and even fluctuates within the filial cohort under investigation in this study (O'Neil et al., 1995). As issues of mating, career and separation from family become increasingly salient for the cohort under investigation, anxiety is likely to increase. As such, these issues may produce defensiveness on the part of sons in the relationship which may find expression in adherence to traditional norms. In other words, given the conflictual nature of the data, it is possible that conflict in the relationship, some of it developmentally driven, is what is actually observed in the data.

Further, the data may be demonstrating more than a cohort effect. It may be demonstrating the static generated as developmentally disparate cohorts attempt to participate in a relationship which is by nature fraught with difficulties engendered through gender role socialization. On one end are sons struggling with issues of emotional expression, separation from family and attaining adulthood. On the other are fathers struggling to develop meaningful connections with their sons who appear to be otherwise occupied.

Another way of viewing these findings may be as the father/son relationship at an historical impasse. Men in contemporary society face an unusual crisis. On the one hand, they have been socialized by and large in a traditional way, with psychological separation emphasized and emotional expressiveness discouraged. On the other hand, men are now encouraged, if not expected to achieve higher levels of relatedness and emotional expression than at any time in the past. This in itself can precipitate a crisis in individual men who are currently asked to function emotionally and relationally at levels precluded by their developmental experience. This proposition is reminiscent of Pleck's proposition #9, that historical change causes sex role strain (1981, p. 9). It is conceivable that with regard to this sample, this crisis is being played out between fathers and sons with fathers, somewhat surprisingly, expressing a desire to represent contemporary values and sons, for developmentally driven reasons, more mired in traditional norms, at least within the context of their relationships with their fathers.

Rethinking the Predictors of Perceived Paternal/Filial Mutuality

Two sets of data were collected on paternal empathy: emotional and cognitive. Emotional empathy was initially entered into the regression model. It was weakly correlated with the dependent measures and in the opposite direction than predicted. While still not strongly correlated with the dependent measures, father's cognitive empathy was correlated in the expected direction. Therefore, cognitive empathy was experimentally substituted in the regression model for emotional empathy. While still debated, there is a suggestion in the literature that empathy in males might better be measured as a cognitive, rather than an affective phenomenon. For example, Pollack (1995) argues that because of the dual effect of a cross-gender need/capacity to experience the feeling states of others and the "anti-empathic" nature of

male socialization practices, male empathy is expressed in an arena which is socially acceptable for them: the cognitive capacity for perspective taking.

Finally, because paternal warmth was correlated with all of the predictors and strongly so in one case, its overlap with other predictors was such that its presence in the regression model at this stage did not add to the model. Therefore, with its deletion from the model, the study data produced a regression model which can predict sons' Restrictive Emotionality as well as sons' Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men.

In the final analysis, the data of the study in fact supported the central assertions of the literature review, that certain personality characteristics in a father and certain qualities in the father/son relationship can have a moderating effect on the pressure for a developing male to adhere to socially prescribed gender role norms for a sense of security as a male. The data suggested that some variable or variables on the part of sons which render them 'ready' to make use of their fathers' mutual identification seems to be an important linchpin in these data. While these findings are encouraging, due to the complex interaction of cultural, personality/developmental, and relationship dynamics, gender role conflict remains difficult to predict with certainty from paternal characteristics and mutual identification in the father/son relationship. The findings suggest that culturally driven imperatives, which socialize men away from relationship and toward individuation, continue to have a profound and negative impact on the ability of fathers and sons to share optimally in their relationships together.

The Son/Mother Relationship and Gender Role Conflict

Maternal warmth and son/mother mutuality were significant predictors of sons' low gender role conflict. Maternal warmth was the stronger of the two predictors. The finding suggests that, contrary to the traditional literature, sons' relationships with their mothers are

relatively less fraught than those they share with their fathers. The data further suggested that maternal warmth and a sense of identification with mother moderates a tendency to adhere to culturally driven gender role norms in a more straightforward way than their paternal equivalents. This finding contradicts the traditional literature (e. g., Greenson, 1968), which argued that a son's continued affective bond with his mother represents an impediment to achieving normative adult malehood.

When the data of this study were compared to a study of mother/daughter relationships (Girard, 1998), the results supported the assertions of self in relation theory that mothers and daughters share higher levels of mutual identification in their relationships than do fathers and sons. This was an expected finding and does not diminish the findings of the present study regarding the father/son relationship. Rather than make simple comparisons between parent/child configurations and which has a more positive impact on whose development, instead it is important to note that the findings regarding sons and mothers support an underlying assertion of the present study: that warmth in a caregiver and open communication and a feeling of being understood impact developing males such that they measurably diminish any tendency to seek emotional stability in traditional role norms. The finding simply suggests that culturally driven imperatives, which socialize men away from relationship and toward individuation, continue to have a profound and negative impact on the ability of fathers and sons to share optimally in their relationships together.

Concluding Remarks

This study attempted to bridge a gap in the literature by testing the empirical consistency between two theories which are consistent in the abstract. However, lacking a unified theory of the role of the father/son relationship in moderating the cultural pressure to adhere to traditional

gender role norms, the study met with qualified success. However, it is expectable that a father/son study based upon self-in-relation theory should meet with qualified success. While self-in-relation theorists argue that their model, with its emphasis on mutual psychological development vs. separation/individuation, may enhance our understanding of all human development, in its current formulation, it remains gender specific, and likely has more predictive power in studies of mother/daughter relationships than in studies of father/son relationships. Further, the emphasis for males in development continues to be toward separation and individuation, perhaps thus rendering the MPDQ a less than ideal measure of mutual identification in the father/son relationship. Conversely, gender role conflict represents only one of many possible ways to view outcomes in studies of the father/son relationship. While gender role conflict theory aptly describes the cultural dynamics which drive its measurable outcomes, nothing is known yet as to how family dynamics in general, and the father/son relationship in particular moderate the impact of the culture on developing sons.

While gender role conflict theory touches upon unconscious conflicts which contribute to experiences of role conflict, the GRCS measures their outward, conscious expression. As the GRCS is an instrument which measures conscious experiences available for self-report, which are largely responses to the social environment, the very individuals who are highest in gender role conflict may be the same individuals who select themselves out of such studies. This may be especially so in studies of father/son relationships. Development and use of measures of the more unconscious dimensions of gender role attitudes may in future meet with less equivocal results in subsequent studies of mutual identification in the father/son relationship. At the same time, a comprehensive theory which can account for the ways in which fathers moderate the

impact of cultural mores on developing sons, might produce a measure capable of accounting for the impact of relationship quality on outcomes in this area.

Further integration of these two theoretical domains with more empirical support may produce research with increasingly definite results in the future. As it stands today, the new psychology of men in general, and gender role conflict theory in particular, lack specific models of how fathers effect their sons' development and more specifically, how the father/son relationship mitigates against the damaging impact of culturally driven gender role norms on developing sons. In the end, it remains clear that the literature would benefit by the development of a social constructionist account of the father/son relationship.

Table 1.

Means, Standard Deviations and Ranges of Scores for Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS),Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire(MPDQ), Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) and Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) for Complete Father/Son Pairs (n=51)

Scale	M	SD	Range
Sons			
GRCS			
Restrictive Emotionality	28.51	10.92	11 – 51
Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men	21.90	8.81	8 – 45
MPDQ			
With Fathers	180.26	28.07	127 – 248
With Mothers	194.06	22.07	138 – 252
PBI			
Care			
With Fathers	25.39	7.35	7 – 36
With Mothers	28.82	5.53	10 – 36
Fathers			
GRCS			
Restrictive Emotionality	29.91	10.29	10 – 58
Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men	24.33	9.55	9 – 44
MPDQ			
With Sons	189.92	20.82	143 – 223
IRI			
Empathetic Concern	20.02	4.22	11 – 28
Perspective Taking	17.40	4.49	6 – 27

Table 2.
Intercorrelations among subscales of the Gender Role Conflict Scale (Restrictive Emotionality and Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men), Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire, Parental Bonding Instrument (Care Subscale), and Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Empathic Concern Subscale): Complete Father/Son Pairs (N = 51)

Subscales	SRE	SRABBM	FRE	FRABBM	SMPDQF	FMPDQ	RATIO	FIRIEC	FIRIPT	SPBIF
Son's Restrictive Emotionality (SRE)	----									
Son's Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men (SRABBM)	.47*	----								
Father's Restrictive Emotionality (FRE)	-.20	-.01	----							
Father's Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men (FRABBM)	-.13	.21	.74**	----						
Son to Father Mutuality (SMPDQF)	-.14	-.22	.07	-.05	----					
Father to Son Mutuality (FMPDQ)	.21	.05	-.19	-.27*	.38*	----				
Son/Father Disparity Score (Ratio)	-.27*	-.25	.22	.15	.73**	-.36*	----			
Father's Emotional Empathy (FIRIEC)	.10	.05	-.11	-.21	.15	.39*	-.13	----		
Father's Cognitive Empathy (FIRIPT)	-.16	-.11	-.14	-.20	.17	.19	.03	.45*	----	
Paternal Warmth (SPBI)	-.16	-.12	-.20	-.20	.71**	.42*	.40*	.26	.29*	----

Note: **p<.01; *p<.05

Table 3.
Table of Coefficients for Sons' Restrictive Emotionality According to the Initial Regression Model (R =.36; F(4, 46) =1.69; p=.17).

Variable	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	T	Significance
(constant)	8.68	15.69		.55	.58
SMPDQF	-4.E-02	.08	-.10	-.49	.63
FMPDQ	.17	.09	.333	2.05	.05
FIRIEC	.13	.39	.05	.33	.74
PBICARE	-.36	.30	-.24	-1.20	.24

Note. SMPDQF = Son's sense of mutuality in father/son relationship (Son's ratings on Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire).

FMPDQ = Father's sense of mutuality in father/son relationship (Father's ratings on Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire).

FIRIEC = Paternal Empathy (Father's self report on Interpersonal Reactivity Index: Empathic Concern subscale).

PBICARE = Paternal warmth (son's rating of father on Parental Bonding Instrument: Care Scale).

Table 4.

Table of Coefficients for Sons' Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men according to the Initial Regression Model ($R = .39$; $F(4, 46) = 2.07$; $p = .10$).

Variable	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	t-value	Significance
(constant)	16.82	12.99		1.30	.20
SMPDQF	-8.E-02	.06	-.24	-1.25	.22
FMPDQ	6.3E-02	.07	.15	.92	.36
FIRIEC	.17	.32	.08	.52	.60
PBICARE	7.6E-02	.24	.06	.31	.76
ETHBK	6.47	2.81	.33	2.30	.03

Note. SMPDQF = Son's sense of mutuality in father/son relationship (Son's ratings on Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire).

FMPDQ = Father's sense of mutuality in father/son relationship (Father's ratings on Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire).

FIRIEC = Paternal Empathy (Father's self report on Interpersonal Reactivity Index: Empathic Concern subscale).

PBICARE = Paternal warmth (son's rating of father on Parental Bonding Instrument: Care Scale.

ETHBK = Ethnic background of the father/son pair.

Table 5.
Table of Coefficients for Sons' Restrictive Emotionality According to the Intermediary Regression Model (R=.33; F(3,47)=2.00; p=.13).

Variable	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	T	Significance
(constant)	33.97	7.46		4.55	.00
DIFF	-.11	.06	-.29	-1.93	.06
FIRIPT	-.38	.35	-.15	-1.08	.29
PBICARE	-1.E-04	.23	.00	-.00	1.00

Note. DIFF = Son/father misattunement score (difference between son's and father's perceived mutuality scores).

FIRIPT= Paternal Empathy (Father's self report on Interpersonal Reactivity Index: Perspective Taking subscale).

PBICARE = Paternal warmth (son's rating of father on Parental Bonding Instrument: Care Scale.

Table 6.
Table of Coefficients for Sons' Restrictive Emotionality According to the Final Regression Model (R=.33; F(2, 48)=3.00; p=.06).

Variable	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	T	Significance
(constant)	33.97	6.00		5.67	.00
DIFF	-.11	.05	-.29	-2.13	.04
FIRIPT	-.38	.33	-.15	-1.14	.26

Note. DIFF = Son/father misattunement score (difference between son's and father's perceived mutuality scores).

FIRIPT = Paternal Empathy (Father's self report on Interpersonal Reactivity Index: Perspective Taking subscale).

Table 7.
Table of Coefficients for Sons' Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men According to the Intermediary Regression Model (R=.41; F(4, 46)=2.37; p=.07).

Variable	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	T	Significance
(constant)	19.67	6.23		3.16	.00
DIFF	-8.E-02	.05	-.25	-1.73	.09
FIRIPT	-.19	.28	-.09	-.67	.51
PBICARE	.18	.19	.10	.62	.54
ETHBK	6.26	2.74	.32	2.28	.03

Note. DIFF = Son/father misattunement score (difference between son's and father's perceived mutuality scores).

FIRIPT= Paternal Empathy (Father's self report on Interpersonal Reactivity Index: Perspective Taking subscale).

PBICARE = Paternal warmth (son's rating of father on Parental Bonding Instrument: Care Scale.

ETHBK = Ethnic background of the father/son pair.

Table 8.
Table of Coefficients for Sons' Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men According to the Final Regression Model (R=.41; F(3, 47)=3.08; p=.04).

Variable	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	T	Significance
(constant)	22.04	4.88		4.52	.00
DIFF	-7.E-02	.04	-.22	-1.63	.11
FIRIPT	-.14	.26	-.07	-.53	.60
ETHBK	5.85	2.64	.30	2.21	.03

Note. DIFF = Son/father misattunement score (difference between son's and father's perceived mutuality scores).

FIRIPT = Paternal Empathy (Father's self report on Interpersonal Reactivity Index: Perspective Taking subscale).

ETHBK = Ethnic background of the father/son pair.

Table 9

Intercorrelations Between Sons' Restrictive Emotionality (SRE), Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men (SRABBM) and Perceived Mutuality with Mother (SMPDQM) and Maternal Warmth (SPBIM).

	SRE	SRABBM	SMPDQM	SPBIM
SRE	-----			
SRABBM	.47*	-----		
SMPDQM	-.30*	-.09	-----	
SPBIM	-.41*	-.22	.53*	-----
ETHBK	.10	.33*	.12	-.03

Note. P<.05*

Table 10.
Table of Coefficients for Sons' Restrictive Emotionality according to Regression Model with Mothers' Data (R=.42; F(2, 48)=5.21; p=.01).

Variable	Unstan-Dardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	t	Significance
(constant)	59.29	12.67		4.68	.00
SMPDQM	-6.E-02	.08	-.11	-.73	.47
PBICARE	-.70	.31	-.35	-2.28	.03

Note. SMPDQF = Son's sense of mutuality in mother/son relationship (Son's ratings on Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire).

PBICARE = Maternal warmth (son's rating of mother on Parental Bonding Instrument: Care Scale.

Table 11.
Table of Coefficients for Sons' Restrictive Affectionate Behavior Between Men according to Regression Model with Mothers' data. (R=.40; F(3, 47)=2.89; p=.05).

Variable	Unstandardized Beta	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	t	Significance
(constant)	31.06	10.49		2.96	.01
SMPDQM	-1.E-02	.06	-.03	-.15	.88
PBICARE	-.31	.25	-.20	-1.23	.22
ETHBK	6.46	2.66	.33	2.43	.02

Note. SMPDQF = Son's sense of mutuality in father/son relationship (Son's ratings on Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire).

FIRIEC = Paternal Empathy (Father's self report on Interpersonal Reactivity Index: Empathic Concern subscale).

PBICARE = Paternal warmth (son's rating of father on Parental Bonding Instrument: Care Scale.

ETHBK = Ethnic background of the father/son pair.

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